

Lehigh County Humane Society
640 Dixon Street
Allentown, PA 18103
610 / 797-1205

May 25, 2009

TO: Lehigh County Commissioners (see list below)

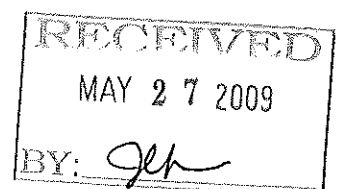
Dear Madam and Sirs:

At a meeting of the Lehigh County commissioners on May 13, 2009, a decision was made to deny funding this year for the animal control duties performed by the Lehigh County Humane Society (LCHS), despite the fact that the LCHS has been successfully performing those duties within the county for many years. This decision was made following a number of presentations to the commissioners by a few citizens who are well known to the LCHS for their persistent attacks on the shelter's management during the past few years, and for their propensity to characterize the shelter unfairly through the use of falsehoods, character assassination and propaganda. The remarks of the attendees apparently went unchallenged by the commissioners, and a decision ensued that had no objective basis.

For the first 4.5 months of 2009, the LCHS has provided animal control services, as an independent contractor, with the good faith expectation of continued funding by the county. Animal control is a governmental function according to state law, and to fulfill that legal responsibility, the county and each of its 23 municipalities have contracted individually each year with the LCHS to provide those critical animal control services. And during those years, the LCHS has incurred costs for its animal control services that clearly exceeded the annual revenues collected from the county and the municipalities. In fact, the LCHS has effectively subsidized the municipalities and the county at an estimated level that exceeded \$200,000 annually. The LCHS cannot continue to provide animal control services without compensating for the loss of the county's funding.

The loss of this revenue to the shelter, which has been used in the past to supplement the varying fees paid by each of the 23 municipalities for our animal control services, means that the municipalities must now bear the compensating burden of significantly increased fees when their individual contracts come up for renewal. We believe that the 23 municipalities, however, like all citizens, businesses and other local government entities, are presently struggling with the burden imposed by the current recession, and that the municipalities might not be able to accept any such substantial increases. In the event that the municipalities cannot absorb the increased cost, the LCHS will no longer be able to provide animal control services when the contracts with the municipalities come up for renewal.

Please understand that our principal concerns stemming from the commissioners' decision are the welfare, health and protection of the animals and the needs of the county residents who will



be adversely affected by the absence of our animal control services. Animals would no longer be brought to the shelter by police for quarantine and rabies evaluation. Our animal control officers would no longer respond to calls to pick up dangerous, stray or abandoned animals. Police and citizens would no longer be able to drop off stray animals at the shelter, many of which need and receive medical care at the shelter. Hundreds of citizens each year will never again enjoy having their lost pet animals returned to them by the shelter. Quite frankly, we do not understand why the commissioners would want that for their constituents or the animals.

In fact, the LCHS will be relieved by no longer having to incur the cost of subsidizing the county and its municipalities. Those extra funds will help us appreciably to absorb the continuing increases in animal admissions and shelter costs that we are experiencing due to the impact of the recession on job losses and foreclosures that force many pet owners to have to relinquish their pets, the need for the LCHS to provide pet food to numerous pet owners who are having difficulty making ends meet and feeding their pets, and because we are the only open-door shelter in the Lehigh Valley to which people who can no longer afford to keep their pets come to relinquish them into our care and shelter. The others are closed-door shelters, i.e., they regularly close their doors to admissions when they reach capacity. The animals that they refuse to admit are typically brought to our shelter. It is our opinion that you made an unwise decision after having been influenced by a one-sided presentation, without giving consideration to the consequences. And the animals and your constituents will suffer because of your failure to be objective.

Very truly yours,



President, LCHS Board of Directors

Cc: Each of the 23 municipalities

Letter addressed to the Lehigh County commissioners:

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